

Ward 4/7 NPA Meeting
Wednesday, October 24, 2018
130 Gosse Court, Miller Center

Start Time: 7:00 PM

End Time: 9:00 PM

Draft: Minutes

Steering Committee Members Present:

Jim Holway, Loaldo Dr., 865-44711238 Linda Deliduka, Village Grn. 864-5114
Jeff Clark, Cumberland Rd., 734-0993 Chris Trombly, Sandy Ln., 238-1158
Eric Corbman, Northshore Dr., 399-2602
David Driscoll, Killarney Dr., 598-1234

Introductions and Announcements

- Debbie Ingram rep: Debbie is unable to make it, she is in Barre. She is running for State Senate re-election. She has served on Health + Welfare Committee, has wealth of municipal knowledge from experience on Williston selectboard. Has done research on homelessness, criminal justice, and economic dignity. Focusing on three main tenets: raising minimum wage, advancing healthcare, welcoming immigrant and refugee population. ingramforsenate.com
- Jeff Comstock: Introduced idea of education funding seminar in New North End. Event is going to happen! Thursday, November 15th, weekend following election. Seminar will be hosted at Miller Center.
- Tim Ashe: State Senator, president of Senate. Proud of Senate's work towards issues Debbie mentioned.

Candidates Forum- House

Jean O'Sullivan-

- State representative, has represented for 3 and a half terms.
- Top priorities: exempt military pensions from state tax. Adult education must be re-vamped, needs more funding. Needs to move towards changing economy. Tax of commercial cannabis sales must be passed, create open space for marijuana entrepreneurship.

Kurt Wright-

- Rep for Chittenden 6-1
 - Has heard a lot about lake cleanup, cost of living in city, need for affordable housing.
- All on his agenda.

-Has worked across party lines to accomplish goals, co-sponsored O'Sullivan's military bill.

-Responded quickly to lobbying issue pointed out by St. Albans messenger, sponsored bill on campaign funding reform.

Bob Hooper-

-bobhooper.org

-Encourages voters to research candidates on Secretary of State website, check voting history of candidates.

Carol Ode-

-Taxes, quality of life continue to be issues.

-Co-sponsored bill to make property taxes fairer, trying to take into account Burlington's student population.

-Increased childcare investment, technical education, and higher education. Created 4-year scholarship for Vermont Guard members.

-Voted to fund lake clean-up. Using unclaimed bottle deposit money as funds to clean lake.

-Waiting on federal government to get OK to create wholesale import of pharmaceuticals at low cost.

Questions:

How can Vermont turn climate change to its advantage?

Hooper: Climate change is not going to be an advantage to anyone. It is an opportunity for our brightest minds to combat what industry and ignorance have created.

O'Sullivan: Paul Costello has idea of drawing companies who are working to combat climate change to Vermont to use state as national hub.

Ode: Committee wrote letter in support of studying greenhouse gas emission reduction. Can save money on home efficiency, create more efficient vehicles, healthcare costs will decrease with clean air/water. Sponsored bill in support of stopping fragmentation of forest parcels.

What is your plan of action towards opiate crisis?

Ode: Chittenden County Opioid Alliance has been working very hard, UVMMC gave grant. Coordinating plan to work on this. Focused on treatment and recovery support, "relentless follow-up".

Hooper: This is a manufactured crisis by pharmaceutical industry. Faced with situation where governments clamped down on prescribing meds, addicts have nowhere to go. Treatment is not as available as it needs to be, statewide and nationally.

Wright: Does not support safe injection sites. Gov. Shumlin made this his focus, and it got a lot of national attention a few years ago. Governor has opioid counsel, focused on prevention. Enforcement is a part, but not as much as treatment.

Wage stagnation- economy is doing well, but wages have not increased. Cost of living is through the roof. What is timeline?

O'Sullivan: Served on minimum wage study committee, fully supports \$15 min. wage. If we have veto-proof majority, we will see wage increase soon. Will build our economy. Goes right back into VT economy.

Hooper: Corporate profits are at all-time high, stock market was off the charts because of this. Taking into account inflation, \$15 is less than minimum wages of the past. The economy will be boosted.

Wright: Have supported reasonable wage increases in the past. Have supported inflation-adjusted wage. However, for small business to make this adjustment would be a huge issue. People who you are trying to help might be hurt by this- hour reduction, benefit cliff issue, etc. Could support if small businesses get exempted.

Ode: Supports the increase over time. Puts money into pockets of Vermonters. Builds strong economy.

Listened to Attorney General debate. TJ Donovan said he's against governor's proposal of building new prison in VT. How do you feel about that?

Hooper: Prison is supposed to be rehabilitative. The way things are set up now, people come back more broken. Minimum wage discussion and economic development discussion ties in. If we build prison in VT, people say it will be economic engine.

Ode: Prison law is hodge podge. Sentences are all over the place. Looking for rational criminal code, bill is in the works. Prisoners should not be sent out of state, and we shouldn't build a prison through an independent company.

Wright: Agrees with TJ Donovan. We should work on reducing prison population.

O'Sullivan: People from corrections department spoke about transitioning prisoners into post-prison world. This system needs more funding.

Cost of health-care- any improvement on controlling high costs of health care?

Hooper: Health care goes up at rate of innovation, rather than rate of inflation. Controlling rate of innovation is hard. Also, we pay insurance companies 25-30% more to pay our bills. Would prefer moving to system where we rely less on insurance companies, more on something that is a self-funded mechanism. Vermonters can join, state-wide bucket.

O'Sullivan: Green Mountain Care Board is trying to bring down actual cost of delivery of service itself. That being said, I am not convinced we can't do single payer. It would take a cultural shift statewide, but I think we could sell people on it and make the change successfully.

Wright: Gov. Shumlin let single payer ship go down. Pulled plug, found to be too expensive. I like the idea of it, but as a small state trying to do it on it's own, it's unworkable. Looking at "all-payer" model.

Ode: Trying something now where payments are being used towards preventative care, rather than in emergency rooms. Saved \$2M in one year. Working towards prescrip drug importation law.

Closing:

Hooper: Would like to have a debate, rather than forum. Pro- safe needle injection sites. Scale of single pay- government does it now, some municipalities do it. Maine and NH have worked with us, they would help us with this.

Ode: Has been an honor to serve for 2 years. More than 80% of bills in Montpelier come out of Committees, we are working across party lines to pass bills unanimously or near-unanimously. Was chosen to go to Council of State governments in Kentucky. Was seen as outstanding state government official.

O'Sullivan: Ranking member of House commerce. State bond rating got lowered- wants to grow economy, work on workers comp that is killing small businesses.

Wright: Doesn't care about party, does what he thinks is right. Party comes last, hopefully New North End wants this in their representative. Affordability will continue to be issue.

DPW Great Streets Update:

North Ave un-signalised crosswalks:

- Ward St, Village Green. Gosse Court, Green Acres. Final designs are being completed now, will be completed spring or summer 2019.

- Ethan Allen Parkway- water main has been replaced, upsized for greater capacity. Temporary patching on it for now.

- North Ave/Ethan Allen intersection

 - 5-way intersection

 - Planning process underway, first public meeting this winter.

- Update on residential parking efforts

 - Wards 4 + 7 do not have curb space managed. We have 8 miles of curb space in city overall that is regulated by parking program. Bringing forward administrative improvements, such as residents paying into program (\$10/permit), cap on number of permits

Questions:

-Detour for North Ave water installation was done beautifully!

Answer: Cambrian rise was connecting water main.

-Would like to see handicapped parking space on Summit Street. It is near three rabbis who are Hasidic Jews, and they cannot request this. People in their congregation need handicapped parking. Please go talk to them.

Answer: DPW Commission will vote on handicapped spaces, we will take request.

-Lots of questions about white poles protecting bike lanes, flower planters, etc.

Answer: Those are low-cost improvements as part of QuickBuild program, to see how it affects safety. Have made revisions and adjustments before we do permanent fixes with curbing, etc.

-How will these QuickBuild features affect snow removal?

Answer: Some features will be moved for winter.

-Concern about speed of people driving on Ward St. Doesn't seem like speed bumps are effective.

Answer: Improvements to come to Ward St.

-Saw speed gun on Shore Rd. What was it for?

Answer: Collecting data and using it as traffic-calming mechanism. Was requested by resident. If you are interested, call us, and DPW can install.

-Can individual property owners help with stormwater run-off?

Answer: Sign-up as drain defender, where you clean catch-basins. Unhooked down-spout, so that water can run into yard instead of into stormwater systems.

-Crosswalks around Flynn School- can timeline be moved up?

Answer: Have received request. Will examine crosswalk and hopefully move quickly if given local funds.

-Equity is something we hear a lot about. When will south end of North Ave parking be removed?

Answer: Trying to provide un-fragmented safe corridors. Project is on hold while Redstone construction goes on.

-What is the plan for paving the rest of North Ave?

Answer: We paved a section last year. Patching is not permanent solution. No timeline yet for North Ave, but it is being looked at.

-Is sidewalk repair being prioritized?

-Answer: We have 130 miles of sidewalk. We used to repair 1 mile a year. We are now repairing 3 miles/year. Sections we are trying to catch up on.

Candidate Forum: Senate

Lewis Myers:

-Independent on Independent ballot, the only one. Also a physician. This is important because health care is a major priority, physicians are trained to solve problems. Having someone in state govt who knows healthcare is important

Seth Conoyer:

-Running libertarian. One of youngest candidates. Running because issues facing VT will affect his generation. Pretty hard to find affordable housing in Vermont, which drives away

young people. Looking to reform permitting system, zoning laws. Education is another priority. Pushing for school-choice system, Sweden has similar system.

Chris Pearson:

-Current Senator. Prior to this term, served in House. History as someone who pushes issues. One of first legislators to introduce minimum wage increase. Serves on natural resources and energy committee. Willing to ask difficult questions. Pushing reform to democratic process, now 90% of Vermonters are registered to vote. Endorsed by Bernie Sanders.

Phil Barruth:

-Served as school commissioner for Ward 4. Tried to think about Vermont education during time in state gov. Showed state government unique challenges of Burlington school system: lots of New Americans, English learners. Pushed for changes in special education law to include ELL.

Michael Sirotkin:

-Appointed Chair of Economic Development and Housing committee. Has worked on behalf of consumers and working families. Worked on paid family leave bill, and minimum wage bill, which were vetoed. Will continue to push for them .

Joshua Knox:

-Public high school teacher at Mt Mansfield United. Running for Vermont's kids. Pushing for proportional representation.

Ginny Lyons:

-Former chair of selectboard for 10 years, lots of experience in government. Also a professor of biology, taught at Trinity College in Burlington. Focused on climate change, land use, addiction issues.

Paul Dane:

-Grew up on dairy farm in Brandon, VT. Served in House of Representatives, in Human Services committee. Passed child protection bill, tightened custody laws. Worked on expanding treatment for opioid addiction, decreasing waiting times for treatment.

Questions:

How is Vermont going to support New Americans- better access to jobs, education, etc.?

Conoyer: VT has low population, needs more workers. Hopefully increasing demand for jobs will help support refugee population. Disagrees with federal position on tightening green card access.

Pearson: Challenge in Burlington/Winooski school system is English language learning. Funding formula from state does not begin to meet need. Housing bond passed a year ago to add to affordable housing solutions. Always playing catch-up, housing was identified as top issue in regards to VT affordability for New Americans. Challenging to find resources.

Barruth: Altering state formula is dynamite- if we alter formula for needs in Burlington, rural communities will see tax rate rise, and they don't have New Americans like Chittenden County. When we revamped special ed system, we broadened funding definition from students with IEPs, to students with different needs (such as English language learning).

Sirotkin: Tomorrow, will be going to court to swear in new citizens. Chair of Economic committee, did \$35 million housing bond- turns out to \$100 mil with leverage you get from federal gov.

Knox: On planning commission in Essex, we are considering form-based code. Instead of isolating house types, there can be mixed-use housing created more easily. Would replenish housing stock more easily.

Lynn: Has taught maybe refugees at collegiate level. State funding exists for literacy programs. Bond that Sirotkin referenced is just the beginning- needs to be built upon. Burlington has many different languages- those that speak different languages should be fully supported.

Dane: Real concern about green-card holders. Look to refugee communities, empower their leaders to create change from within. Creating leaders within communities can give more power and hope to struggling families who may not understand Burlington gov or programs.

Myers: Most New Americans in VT live in Chittenden County. We have the most jobs, but we also have highest cost of living. Towns across VT are withering away from lack of people- would be helpful to encourage refugee community growth in different towns, where their skills are needed. Ag experience that many refugees come with isn't useful in Burlington, but would be elsewhere.

Burlington schools need more help- new high school will cost \$70 million, but there is a state moratorium on building increases. Taxes are going up, social services in schools are eroding.

-Pearson: Wants to shift away from property tax funding to income tax funding. Bulk of school funds fall to middle class, hurts families. Discussion is usually a tri-partisan effort, but transition is not simple. Social services already being funded through state gov need to pair up with schools, would take away from budget pressure on schools.

-Barruth: Talked about moratorium- it's not a formal thing. It's an understanding within committees. May have made sense when it was created many years ago, but no longer makes sense. Lots of Burlington schools are in need of replacement, not even repairs. Trying to put an end to the moratorium quickly. Wants to create application system for schools/towns to get state help with bonding for school improvements.

-Sirotkin: Defers to Barruth. Big fan of bonding, takes care of immediate need without jeopardizing tax rating. Moratorium has run its course. Agrees with Pearson on social services- schools can't be responsible for everything (hunger, trauma, family issues.)

-Knox: Needs to change source of revenue, agrees with Pearson.

-Lyon: Need capital fund for schools. Deferred maintenance has been horrific for schools. Shift from property to income tax is important, agrees with Pearson. Wants more funding for robust after school programs, school nurses.

-Dane: Moving tax from property to income is difficult- property value is stable, income is not that stable. This could be difficult for schools. Must separate social services from general education expenses.

-Myers: Tele-education interest for increased access to courses at lower costs.

-Conoyer: Tech program in Burlington is great, should be expanded to other towns. School choice would increase funding.

Opinion on state gun control?

-Barruth: Universal background checks were passed, worked for a long time on that with Sen. Sirotkin. Bills were all rolled together, but follow-up is needed to provide enforcement. How is background checks on private sales being enforced?

-Sirotkin: Legislation was very controversial. Implementation is critical. Hopefully there will be tweaks but not a repeal.

-Knox: Watch for implementation.

-Lyons: Voted for it. It's time for more oversight to make sure implementation is appropriate.

-Dame: A lot was done last year, hopefully no more will happen. Time to take a breath.

-Myers: Supported S-55, will continue to.

--Conoyer: Thinks it depends on whether Republicans hold Governor's seat.

-Pearson: 80% of gun deaths in Vermont are suicides. Red flag bill allows us to alert authorities about people we are concerned about- removing firearms temporarily if someone is having mental health crisis.

Closing:

-Sirotkin: 65,000 jobs would benefit from wage increase. Only 900 would be adversely affected- pretty good odds. Would put \$175 mil into pockets of Vermonters. Seems like a concrete first step towards fixing income inequality.

-Knox: The important thing is that citizens get involved and vote. Last election saw lots of blanks- lots of resources exist, check out literature so that you don't have to leave anything blank.

-Lyon: Looking forward to next session. Working towards mental health infrastructure improvement, increasing addiction and mental health counselors. Wants to sponsor inclusive equal rights amendment to protect people under Vermont constitution. Haven't talked as group today about climate change, but this is a priority.

-Dame: Wants to reduce cost of living, fix the outflow of young people and small businesses. Unique business background, will help fix business issues.

-Myers: Wants to bring healthcare experience and insights to state senate. Wants to protect rights and health of Vermonters.

-Cournoyer: Legislative branch needs new point of view. Could use Libertarian viewpoints.

-Pearson: Has been a thrill to be in the Senate. State government needs to stand up for working, middle-class families. This viewpoint is not represented enough in Montpelier. Proud to bring forward many bills that passed unanimously. Wants to preserve civility of Vermont state government.

-Barruth: Been sent twice to School Board, four times to Senate. News story came out yesterday about outside group spending \$200,000 in attack ads against Mitsi Johnson, Zuckerman, and Tim Ashe. Wants to ask that you read positive mailers, disregard out-of-state negative mailers. Bad influence on VT state climate of civility.

Minute Taker:

Hannah Carpino – CEDO Intern